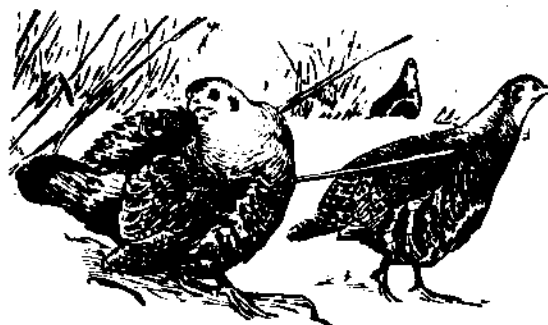


****ATTENTION****

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Habitat management for

**GRAY
PARTRIDGE**

In the State of Washington

The gray partridge, *Perdix perdix*, also called "hungarian partridge," and most popularly known as "Hun," was first introduced into Washington in 1906, when 250 pair were released in Spokane County. Other plantings took place shortly afterward, and within a few years, large populations could be found in suitable habitat throughout the state. About 1940, numbers began to decline, and the Hun has been relegated to a position of minor importance as a game bird in the state. The annual harvest seldom exceeds 30,000 birds.

Intermediate in size between the quails and the pheasant, the Hun is a chunky 12-15 ounce delicacy described by some as the "best eating game bird on earth." The birds associate in covies of up to 20 or 30, and all birds rise simultaneously when flushed, squawking loudly. They usually head for the nearest hilltop and disappear on the other side.

Huns, like quail, are monogamous, and covies break up into pairs in spring. Nesting begins in late April and May. The hen lays an average of 16 eggs, and does all the incubating while the cock stands guard. Both parents share in caring for the chicks.

HABITAT NEEDS

Food. The Hun is primarily a seed and grain eater. In winter, green leafy material may comprise up to 30 percent of the diet. Favorite foods include barley, barnyardgrass, bristlegrass, corn, oats, wheat, and wheatgrasses. Fair foods, eaten in quantity when choice foods are not available, are alfalfa, babyface, cheatgrass, China or prickly lettuce, clover, dandelion, juniper, knotweed, nightshade, pigweed, ragweed, raspberry, Russian-olive, springbeauty, smartweed, sunflower, and tarweed. Chicks eat insects almost exclusively for the first few weeks; after this insects are only a minor diet item, except in summer. Huns consume more grit than other upland game birds do.

Cover. Huns are most abundant in grassy rangeland bordered by wheat fields. They do not seem to need brushy cover except for protection from the wind in severe winter weather. They also use haystacks or old buildings for this purpose. Deep snow is no great problem; the birds burrow into it for protection.

Nesting is usually in grass in fence rows, road rights-of-way, or rangeland. Sometimes the birds nest in grain or alfalfa fields.

Water. Huns do not require free water, but they will drink if it is available. Otherwise, dew, insects, or succulent vegetation supply the need.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

The greatest need of the Hun is for nesting cover undisturbed by farm machinery. Fence rows, roadsides, and other grassy odd areas should be protected from burning or other destructive means.

Strips of unharvested grain may be left adjacent to grassland for winter food.

Grit should be provided away from roads to reduce accident losses.